



SENATOR JAY ROCKEFELLER AND TOURISM

Senator Jay Rockefeller recognized the unique beauty of West Virginia and its people after arriving as a VISTA volunteer in the small mining community of Emmons in 1964.

Upon being elected Governor, Rockefeller built on his appreciation for West Virginia's natural beauty by making tourism a hallmark of his administration.

He continued that legacy upon becoming a United States Senator; among his first leadership positions was Chairman of the Trade and Tourism Subcommittee. Today, he serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, which has jurisdiction over federal tourism initiatives.

As Governor, Rockefeller

- presided over dynamic growth in West Virginia's tourism industry; during his first term alone, the travel industry doubled, from \$500 million to \$1 billion after he started the Travel West Virginia program; when he left office, the tourism industry was the state's third largest employer, and direct tourism sales tripled to nearly \$1.5 billion annually;
- directed West Virginia Economic Development Authority investments into major tourism facilities;
- championed the whitewater rafting industry, working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to closely manage the water flow of the New and Gauley rivers, transforming both into world-class whitewater rafting destinations;
- dedicated funds to develop Winterplace Resort as part of an emphasis on the state's potential for a thriving skiing industry;
- with his wife, Sharon, set up programs to showcase traditional West Virginia quilts by establishing the first quilters cooperative;
- invested \$40 million for capital improvements at State Parks and recreation areas;
- developed and opened a new park, Beech Fork State Park in Wayne County;
- created, through a \$500,000 initiative, the Blennerhassett Island Commission, which restored the Blennerhassett Island and created the Blennerhassett Museum;
- opened the Governor's mansion to regular tours, which resulted in more than 750,000 visitors during his administration;

- assigned Camp Washington Carver to the Department of Culture and History, funded the restoration of the camp and opened it for full programming;
- worked again with the Army Corps of Engineers to create Stonewall Jackson Lake, which now is home to one of the state's premier destination resorts;
- completed the New River Gorge Bridge, perhaps the state's best-known tourism attraction.

As U.S. Senator, Rockefeller

- introduced legislation to study state-run scenic byways, which led to the creation of the All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways program; today, two West Virginia roads—the Highland Scenic Byway and the Coal Heritage Trail are designated as National Scenic Byways thanks to Rockefeller's efforts;
- wrote legislation that authorized construction of a new visitor's center and National Park Service Headquarters at Glen Jean;
- sponsored the West Virginia Rivers Act, which established the Gauley and Meadow rivers as national recreation areas and the Bluestone River as the state's first national scenic river;
- helped create—and has repeatedly fought for—the Essential Air Service program, which helps small airports in Parkersburg, Clarksburg, Morgantown and Beckley offer affordable air transportation to West Virginians;
- fought for passage of the Travel Promotion Act of 2009, the first program dedicated to increasing the numbers of international visitors to the United States and helped Brand USA develop partnerships with 200 businesses and raise \$10 million in cash and more than \$20 million in in-kind, promotional contributions;
- continued his support of important state projects, like Historic Hinton; Stonewall Jackson Resort; the Hatfield McCoy Trail; and the Midland Trail.